WHITE DWARF

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WHITE DWARF

This is the sixth issue of *White Dwarf* and that means effectively a year of publication – with many more to come we hope. Time usually brings change and *White Dwarf* is no exception to the rule.

Firstly, would everybody please note that we have moved our editorial office to 1 Dalling Road, Hammersmith, London W6, and all correspondence should be sent to that address from now on.

Secondly, we would like to remind all those people who began their subscription to *White Dwarf* with issue 1 that renewals are now due. Now here's the bad news; the price has increased to 60p per issue as from issue 7 to keep in line with rising print and paper costs. A small contribution is also needed to cover postage and packing so the annual subscription will now be £4.00.

Thirdly, and here's the good news, we are pleased to announce two improvements with respect to the appearance of *White Dwarf.* This issue, as you might have noticed, contains justified text which means no more jagged right-hand margins. Next issue will be the first to have the luxury of a full colour cover and for that we hope to obtain the talents of John Blanche who is renowned for his colour art.

No doubt in another twelve months' time more changes will be announced. We try to give readers what they want but we are always open to suggestions as to how to keep on improving *White Dwarf.* If you have any interesting contributions, comments or criticisms, why not send them in? It all helps.

Ian Livingstone

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COMBAT and ARMOUR CLASS

by Roger Musson

It would make an interesting survey to solicit contributions up and down the country from DMs and players on the subject "The one thing I dislike most about D&D", I strongly suspect most of the answers returned would be on some aspect of combat. The combat system in D&D has so many faults with regard to realism that it would be difficult to enumerate them all. There is the thorny problem of critical hits, for example: slitting a man's throat with a dagger theoretically does 1-4 points of damage, and if he has thirty or so to spare he presents, in the Churchillian idiom, "some neck". Now, whereas any DM with a bit of gumption will allow a dagger in the jugular to be fatal without question, the same problem creeps up in more insidious ways. Consider what would happen if you chained up a 1st level magician with 1hp and an 8th level fighter with 45hp, both sans armour, outside the cave of your friendly neighbourhood red dragon. Said dragon ventures forth, decides he likes offerings to be burnt ones, and gives them both a quick blast of fiery breath (why can't dragons use toothpaste like everyone else?). They both take 30 points of damage, with the result that the magician is burnt to a crisp, while the fighter, though singed, is amazingly enough, still alive. How is that? Has finding x thousand gold pieces caused his skin to turn to asbestos? A man's a man for all that; either they should both be fried or they should both survive. Nor will I accept the argument that the man with less hit points is more likely to die of shock, since dragon breath is a lot more than a touch of heartburn.

Then there are the usual difficulties of hit location, and the fact that characters seem to receive wounds in the abstract rather than in a more immediate sense, since they often go merrily hacking away despite the fact that they have been reduced to the grand total of one hit point, and are probably limbless by now. They then, if they survive, grab the loot, and dash from the dungeon in full plate regardless of the damage they have suffered. Now, there are of course, several systems that have been devised to oversome one or more of these problems: the advanced combat in *Blackmoor* and *Eldritch Wizardry,* and Andy Holt's systems published as "Loremaster of Avalon" in *White Dwarf* are examples. However, for all its disadvantages, the original combat system has one great advantage: it is simple and easy to use, and therefore familiar to all players including visitors, who know where they are without elaborate introduction to house rules. The system is backed up by such things as the excellent *Judges Shield* which has all the relevant tables on it, is quick and relatively easy to manage large and complicated combats, and provides a convenient way to resolve combat effectively for those like myself who are more interested in the dramatic (in the widest sense of the word) side of D&D rather than approaching it as an extension of gladatorial combat with miniatures. If a party of ten attacks fifteen wolves, the last thing I want as DM is to have to record, in the middle of melee, who has hurt his arm, and was it his right arm or left arm, and which wolf has lost a paw, and so one, right round the whole battle. The question is: does anyone get killed, and do they get to the treasure? With regard to that much, the basic combat system is sufficient, and I am more concerned with getting the fight over to see what the players do with the sleeping vampire the wolves are guarding rather than spending a long time over myriad dice rolls to determine hit location.

However, there is one thing that really does irritate me about the combat system, because its chief effect is in its implications outside combat. Now, since D&D is a fantasy game, "realism" is a word one has to use carefully. There is realism with respect to dull, scientific, historical reality, and there is realism with respect to literary fantasy such as originally inspired games like D&D. In the latter case, of course, conventions vary from writer to writer, and it is always possible to postulate a Gygax universe which the game system in D&D re-creates entirely faithfully. But the more this hypothetical mythology departs from what is conventional in most fantasy writing, the less the player is able to identify with the game. Now, conjure up an image of your favourite fantasy hero, be he Gilgamesh or Tarzan, Aragorn or Conan. What is he wearing? Nothing very special, usually, lest it be a leather loincloth. Now think of your favourite D&D fighter – a walking sardine-can of magic plate armour if the ones I've seen are anything to go by. Not someone you would expect to see swinging through the trees on a creeper. Admittedly one thinks of, say, Lancelot fully armoured (on his horse and lancing a lot, though, and not on foot down a dungeon), but since when did you last see Sinbad clanking around like the tin man in Wizard of Oz? Yet when Sinbad gets into a sword-fight with half a dozen fire elementals, he does all right out of it with nothing but a silk shirt to protect him. Try doing the same in D&D, and, armour class 9, you will find yourself very swiftly torn to shreds. How does Sinbad do it? The answer is simple: he lunges, parries, jumps out of the way, swings from chandeliers etc. Whereas the average D&D fighter just stands around and waits to get hit. Clearly the importance of dexerity in combat has been under-rated.

So what do I propose? In most fantasy accounts of melee, there is a lot of thrust and parry, and the first one or two blows that actually land usually decide to combat. Ultimately I think there should be a combat system (I'm working on it) in which as one goes up levels one gains no more hit points but becomes progressively more harder to hit. This will take a lot of balancing to get absolutely right, but I will try to demonstrate the lines along which I am thinking.

The first step, which I have already brought into effect in the *Egyazaryan Dungeon,* is the following rule: if a character who is trained in fighting (ie a fighter, monk, beserker, etc) chooses to wear no armour, his armour class in combat is 20 minus his dexterity score. This number may never be more than 9, but it may be less than 2 if exceptional dexterity on a natural 18 is rolled. Thus if our unamoured Conan has a dexterity of 16 he fights as AC4; dexterity of 10 and he is AC9 still, and if he is so fortunate to be dextrous to the extent of 18^{00} he will fight at a stunning AC-1. If he encumbers himself with armour, the gain in protection exactly balances the loss in agility, unless magic is involved. Therefore a fighter with a dexterity of 14 is AC6 unarmoured, and AC6 still if he picks up a shield, though chain mail will bring him up to AC5 since his AC is never worse that what it would be under normal rules. If he picks up a +5 shield, he becomes 6 – 1 + 1 – 5 = AC1. This rule supercedes the "avoid attack" rule which gives one a paltry +1 on dexterity over 14.

It will, though, be clear that there are implications in the phrase "armour class in combat". The bonus will not apply if the character is lying down while someone fires arrows at him. In fact the very phrase "armour class" includes a number of things which DMs may or may not have taken into account without thinking about it. We can thus distinguish several different types of armour class calculation. There are as follows:

Combat Armour Class (CAC)

This is your usual run-of-the-mill thing that you cross-index on tables of combat matrices to find out if a blow has hit or not. This assumes the character involved is fighting normally, and thus takes into account not only all magical bonuses, but also all dexterity bonuses. This is, therefore, different from the next category.

Encumbrance Armour Class (EAC)

This is basically what you are wearing. For this purpose, plate is always AC2 regardless of whether it is +2, -4 or normal.

Target Armour Class (TAC)

This is a tricky one. Assume someone the other end of a long corridor hurls an unfriendly-looking lightning bolt at you. Does

he score a hit? Obviously plate mail is no protection against lightning; it might even act as a conductor, increasing your chances of being hit. Accordingly, everyone's target armour class is always 9, with the following modifications: dexterity bonuses if applicable should be taken into account if dodging is feasible. Magical protection may be allowed, so that a character with plate mail and a +1 shield would be TAC8; thirdly, bonuses may be given for being small to dwarves, hobbits, and so on.

Prone Armour Class (PAC)

This is the last of my little collection. In the case of your character being face-down and unconscious on the dungeon floor, with a nasty fellow with an axe standing over him taking swipes, prone armour class is a measure of how tough a covering you've got. This therefore includes armour and magic (except shields) but obviously not dexterity bonuses. This chiefly comes into question with regard to monks. My ruling is that monks may benefit from dexterity modifiers as outlined above, and that the sequence of armour classes in Blackmoor, being essentially body toughness is applicable to Prone Armour Class. When a monk goes up a level in PAC he does not gain an equivalent rise in CAC, until his prone armour class is better than his ordinary combat armour class (including dexterity but excluding rings of protection and the like) whereupon his basic Prone Armour Class becomes his basic Combat Armour Class. A monk with a dexterity of 14 would be AC6 until he reached 6th level, when he would go up to AC5 and continue to increase normally. If he started out with a +1 ring of protection he would increase from AC5 to AC4 when he went up to 6th. It should also be noted that it is Prone Armour Class of the defender which is called into question with regard to surprise attacks and missile fire (ever tried parrying an arrow?).

Now, I'm not suggesting that you should carefully note down all these on a character's sheet; my character sheets tend to get crowded enough as it is; merely that these theoretical considerations should be taken into account whenever the practical need arises.

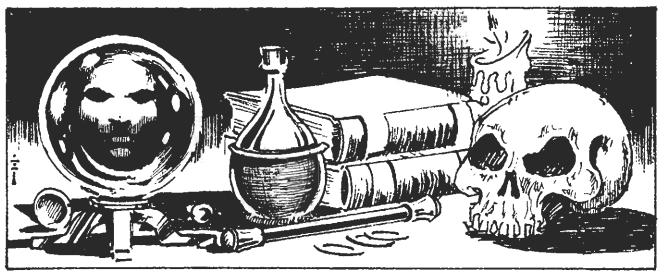
The next consideration is the fact that as a character gains experience in fighting, not only should his ability to hit things increase, but so should his ability to stop things hitting him. Currently I am considering letting a fighter who wears no armour shifting his AC by two whenever he gains +2 on hits, and reneging this bonus if armour is worn. However, even in plate parrying improves with practice. But to increase defence by decreasing AC as well as gaining hit points would make characters too powerful. So ultimately I should like to see a system like this; when a character goes up a level, he increases his hit points by one die as per normal up to a base maximum of 10 hit *points* (modified up or down according to constitution). This represents the maximum amount of damage a human being can take. When the maximum is reached no further hit dice are added. However, right from the start, whenever a character goes up a level, his combat armour class decreases by one – from 2 to 1 for those humanoid juggernauts in plate, and from 9 to 8 for magicians. This may mean that after a fighting man gets up several levels he will be totally invulnerable to say, kobolds; which I think is perfectly fair and reasonable: what hero worth his sodium chloride ever got outfenced by a kobold? And note that if the kobolds are cunning they could still get him with missile fire or a surprise attack – which I think is the only realistic way they could get him. To go through most fights without a wound is much more likely than to regularly expect to lose thirty hit points per expedition. And when a wound is inflicted, its effect is all the more severe – again realistic. A light wound from a flying dagger may be shrugged off, but a decent hack with a sword should stop anyone in their tracks and make them think twice about continuing combat.

This change also puts magic into a better perspective. Healing potions become less of an every-day necessity, but become more valuable in terms of the percentage hit points restored to even a high-level character. Magic armour also becomes more powerful, and the DM should be careful about how much of the +5 variety he hands out if he doesn't want people's AC disappearing off the end of his chart.

If the DM finds his characters getting too powerful, there are two restrictions which can be slipped in; one is the introduction of fatigue factors in some manner, so that after fighting so many rounds, defences start slackening until a good rest can be had – and if an unpleasant wanderer turns up during the rest, the consequences may be severe. This, I think, is desirable. A matter of personal taste is the abolition of plate armour, or at least, its reduction to a breast-plate, either by crippling encumbrance rules or by simply making it technologically unknown. This gets rid of that awkward problem that arises when a wolf attacks some character done up head to foot in steel; on a roll of 20 the wolf bites for 1-6, but how the devil do you bite plate armour?

The final thing to consider is death (isn't it always?) under the new system. Assume your 10 hit point character has just been walloped by a golem for 20 points of damage. I would suggest a saving throw should be applicable rather than automatic fatality. Under the new system, a character reduced below 0 hit points would make two saving throws, firstly against constitution (throw 3 dice with intent to score below constitution – if the dice total is equal to or above the character's constitution, he has failed to save) and then against strength. If he fails to save against constitution, he is dead. If he makes his first saving throw but not the second, he is unconscious, incapacitated, and very ill. If he makes both saving throws, he retains consciousness and just enough strength to crawl out of the melee (but not much further). In any case, whenever the character is reduced below 0 hit points, he loses one point from his constitution permanently, no matter what. This represents a certain amount of permanent internal injury; the referee may also like to determine whether or not the character has suffered any severe external injury in such cases, for instance, loss of a limb. In cases of death the referee should allow a chance that the character has been mortally wounded rather than killed instantaneously, in which case a dying magician may just have breath enough to mutter the spell that will save the party. In such a case, whether healing potions are permitted to have any effect or not, is a matter of taste. One could modify the saving throw system in such a way that failure to make the first throw meant instantaneous death, failure to make the second was a mortal wound (with chance of using magical remedies) and making both resulted only in incapacitation. There is a wide scope for modifications to suit the particular whims of the DM.

I think the overall effect of using such a system will be to weaken characters slightly, and DMs may like to modify some of the higher monsters slightly to take this into account. But I think the great advantage of it is that it should encourage a more realistic approach to combat on the part of the players. The doctrine of "let's go in and fight, and when I've lost half my hit points we can dodge out again" I find highly irritating. No hero could ever afford to calculate that he could take x number of sword blows at 1-8 per blow before he was in any danger, nor do people accept the idea of being "just" wounded in combat as agreeable the way some players do. Being wounded is a serious business, and a good fighter enters a combat with the intention to avoid wounds altogether. If it means that players take less risks, and think more carefully about attacking a dangerous creature, I think it is so much better. If we can increase realism in D&D without reducing its playability, we have improved the game.



A regular feature introducing new and interesting monsters, edited by **Don Turnbull.**

Inventive monster designers among the readership permitting, each issue of *White Dwarf* from now on will present a batch of new monsters for the delight of those DMs who seek more variety in the inhabitants of their dungeons. Each monster so presented will earn for its author the next issue of *White Dwarf* free – it is hoped that this small award will encourage readers to submit monster designs since the feature cannot exist without them; we are in your hands. Please send your entries to The Fiend Factory, c/o *White Dwarf*. Remember – one free issue per monster published!

Entries must, however, be complete – incomplete entries will not be printed. With the best will in the world, we can't be expected to invent a beast's AC, the damage it does if it hits etc. Designers must include necessary information otherwise their creations may never see the light of day.

Since it looks as though you are stuck with me as assembler of this column, at least until the *White Dwarf* management slings me out in favour of someone more charitable and less patronising, it might help prospective entrants if I were to indicate, briefly, the more important qualities I think a monster should have in order to qualify for publishing, since I have been asked to select for inclusion only those which I think would be interesting (though perhaps fatal) to meet and which bring a breath of novelty.

First, a monster should either be killable or, of effectively immortal, should have a specific purpose other than slaughtering player-characters. I enjoy the type of beast, like the Tanstaafl (invented by Bill Taylor) which keeps magical items reasonably scarce without endangering life (the Tanstaafl robs player-characters of their powerful magical items, but normally won't harm them). I enjoy the monster, like the Census-Taker (invented by Cheryl Lloyd) which prevents powerful parties from rampaging around the 'easy' levels picking up treasure without noticeable danger (the Census-Taker generally teleports parties to a 'floor' appropriate to their strength). Both these creations are from *Alarums & Excursions* – Lee Gold's apa which is a constant source of new beasts. But the monster which normally aims at extracting blood from player-characters, whether purposefully or in defence of treasure or territory, should be mortal, and furthermore should be killable by some means reasonably likely to be discovered. The monster which can't be hurt by weapons or magic and which flays a party at will until someone shouts 'Thursday' – it may be psychologically interesting but is not, generally speaking, worthy of more than passing note. I do not however make it a requirement that a monster should be killable by any strength of party – a weak party usually has the option of running away, so a powerful beast can still qualify.

Secondly, it must be deployable. The ultra-powerful beast with all sorts of fascinating qualities is likely to lead a solitary life in the nethermost depths so perhaps isn't worth making too much of a fuss about. This is not to say that this feature will only include beasts which can realistically be found on 'easy' floors (though I do say there is a dearth of interesting yet relatively weak monsters), but there are limits. If you have created a 40D8 beast with AC around -10, 95% magic resistance and four 4D12 attacks each round, it would have to be exceptionally interesting to qualify for inclusion in the Factory.

Thirdly, I have little regard for monster designers who treat their creative work as though they were filling a hat-stand – a few miscellaneous hats hung on top (claws, bites, horns, tails and the like), arrays of coats and scarves hung from the pegs (dragon wings, gnat eyes, snake tails) and a few umbrellas of mixed parenthood in the centre (magic resistance, spell use, gaze which petrifies, breath which poisons). Anyone – but anyone – can 'create' a new monster by rolling on random tables, and anyone can create the tables; but the result is not likely to be interesting because it is not likely to be coherent. I believe a monster should be vaguely credible and moderately self-consistent, and I like to see evidence of creative thought on the designer's part. However I do not object to biological improbability per se – after all, the existence of magic is pretty improbable for a start, yet in the D&D universe we accept it without question.

Finally, a monster is much more interesting if it has surprising, even asinine or humourous qualities. This can't be expected of all monsters, but it is welcome when it appears.

Now to the collection for this month.

THE NEEDLEMAN

by Trevor Graver

No. appearing:	**1–50**
Armour class:	**6**
Movement:	**8"**
Hit Dice:	**3D8+4**
Treasure:	**type G**
Attack:	**1–6 needles (1D4 each)**
Alignment:	**Lawful/Evil**
Monstermark:	**38.3 (level III in 12 levels).**

This beast looks rather like a spined Zombie but is not a member of the Undead. It originated as the result of a Raise Dead spell imperfectly executed on a corpse in a shallow grave on a bed of pine needles; these became imbedded in the flesh. Within a range of 20' it can fire 1D6 needles, for 1D4 damage each, with the accuracy of a short-range arrow (12 or more to

hit AC2). It takes triple damage if hit by magical means and attacks Elves on sight.

Comments: An unusual and interesting monster on the lines of a weak Manticore. I presume it is particularly magic-prone because the magic in its creation went wrong, while it attacks Elves because they are wood-dwellers (or at least some of them are) and therefore associated with pine-needles. Should it really be called the Aspirin? It is, after all, a pine-killer . . . . . .

The Throat Leech

by Ian Livingstone

No. appearing: 1–6
Armour class: 9
Movement: 1" (in water)
Hit Dice: 1 hit point
Treasure: nil
Attack: 1 blood-suck 1–3 plus special Choke
Alignment: Neutral
Monstermark: about 1.5 (level I in 12 levels)

The Throat Leech is always found in fresh water (streams, pools, fountains etc.) and is 1" in length, resembling an incinspicuous twig floating on the water. When an adventurer (or monster) drinks, the Leech will swim into his mouth and fasten itself onto the soft flesh at the back of the throat, sucking blood at 1–3 each melee round until it becomes completely distended. Each melee round there is a 50% chance that the Leech will cause the adventurer to choke, causing an additional 1–4 damage; the victim will die if he chokes for three consecutive melee rounds. When filling water bottles from a fresh-water source, there is a 10% chance that a Throat Leech will be taken in.

The only way to kill a Throat Leech in a victim's throat is for a fellow-adventurer carefully to place a heated wire or some other thin metallic object into the bloated leech; the hot metal will burn the Leech and cause it to burst. The chance of hitting the leech rather than the victim's throat is 5% per dexterity point of the 'doctor'.

Comments: Yes, surely the innocent-looking waters of the dungeon must be fraught with hidden dangers! The exercise of sticking a heated dagger into a friend's throat is not one I would trust to many of my fellow-adventurers, but this is a neat, and probably non-deadly, addition to the risks adventurers run when they tend to their needs.

THE MITE

by Ian Livingstone

No. appearing: 6–24
Armour class: 8
Movement: 3"
Hit Dice: 1D8
Treasure: type C
Attack: 1 attack 1–3
Alignment: Lawful/Evil
Monstermark: 0.8 (level I in 12 levels)

Mites are a mere 2' in height, humanoid with large heads and evil faces. They inhabit networks of narrow tunnels above and below main dungeon corridors and their scurrying feet and high-pitched twittering voices can often be heard by roving groups of adventurers. However they are rarely seen and will never openly attack. They attempt to ensnare the lone adventurer or unwary straggler using trapdoors, nets, tripwires and other such means, bundling him off before help arrives. Those captured by Mites are robbed, stripped, bound and beaten and then, somewhat later, returned helpless to the main corridor at the mercy of wandering monsters. The only known way of fighting these creatures is first to smoke them out of their tunnels, blocking or covering all the other exits (which can only be detected by Elves.)

Comments: A nuisance-value monster which is readily adaptable to almost any dungeon design and provides an incentive for parties to keep together and act cooperatively.

THE BONESNAPPER

by Ian Livingstone

No. appearing: 1–3
Armour class: 4
Movement: 6"
Hit Dice: 4D8
Treasure: type C
Attack: 1 bite (1D6) and 1 tail (1D4)
Alignment: Lawful/Evil
Monstermark: 28 (level III in 12 levels)

Bonesnappers are small descendents of carnivorous dinosaurs, 5' in height but nevertheless fierce fighters. Their favourite pastime is to gnaw bones, which action sharpens up the many teeth in their powerful jaws; they are particularly fond of human bones, since the sharpening effect apart, a Bonesnapper's status is reflected in the number of human jawbones adorning its lair. Should a party enter a dungeon cavern and discover human jawbones about the place, be sure a Bonesnapper is not far away . . . . .

Comments: The possibilities of trade between Bonesnapper and non-human player-characters are endless . . . . .

THE FIEND

by Ian Livingstone

No. appearing: 1
Armour class: 2
Movement: 9"
Hit Dice: 3D8
Treasure: nil
Attack: 2 fists (1D4 each) plus Heat Metal
Alignment: Neutral
Monstermark: 93 (level V in 12 levels)

Fiends are descendents of the mutated offspring of a fallen angel and the evil god Pan who enslaved her. They wander alone seeking vengeance on both good and evil alike, as they detest their own limbo existence. They attack characters on sight using their large fists as cudgels. They also have the ability to heat metal and will attempt to fry the first character they see wearing plate armour. This is a contact attack and causes an additional 3D6 damage per round.

However, as soon as it has killed one character, the Fiend feels great remorse and will offer the survivors its services and powers for a period of two days; this guilt can be attributed to the blood of its ancestral mother running through its veins. After two days, the dominant evil part of the Fiend resumes control and hence its departure from the party it is aiding.

Comments: Not a bad reason for wearing chain mail (which presumably produces a waffle effect on the character when the Fiend attacks) rather than plate. The dubious pleasure of having a Fiend join the party could be useful to players, but if the DM keeps quiet about the length of time during which its assistance is maintained, and if it attacks when that period is over, it presents a neat problem in management; perhaps its return to its normal state could be variable, rather then fixed?

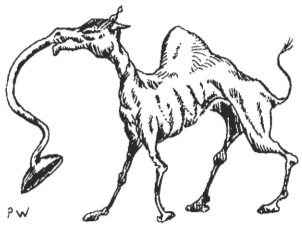
Continued on page 8

THE FIEND FACTORY

Continued from page 7

The DISENCHANTER

by Roger Musson



No. appearing:	**1–2**
Armour class:	**5**
Movement:	**12"**
Hit Dice:	**5D8**
Treasure:	**nil**
Attack:	**Special**
Alignment:	**Neutral**
Monstermark:	**None**

The Disenchanter resembles a spindly, dromedary-like animal with a long snout like a vacuum-cleaner; in colour it is a pale electric blue, slightly translucent – sometimes it can be seen to shimmer slightly. The creature has the power to detect magic on which it feeds, drawing its sustenance from the powerful enchantments used to create magical objects. Should the beast encounter a party, it will be able to detect the strongest magical item carried and will attempt to fasten its snout on the object in question. Once it scores a hit, it drains all the magic out leaving the item unmarked but non-magical (artifacts and very powerful items may get saving rolls at the DM's discretion).

Even allowing for the high dexterity of the Disenchanter's prehensile snout, the ease with which any item can be attacked will depend on its size, and the beast may decide to go for something easy like a magical shield rather than try to get at a small but very potent item in a backpack.

Ironically, the Disenchanter can only be hit by magical weapons; these will not be 'disenchanted' merely by hitting the beast – only with its snout can it 'de-gauss' magical items.

Comments: Now that one of these beasts has been encountered in the Greenlands dungeon, by an annoyed and aggrieved party, I can vouch for its effectiveness both as a device for keeping magic reasonably low and a novel and interesting beast. I like to think it makes a vulgar slurping noise while in the process of eating enchantment, with perhaps even a soft and reverent belch if it particularly appreciates the quality of the magic it has just devoured.

The NILBOG

by Roger Musson (after Nick Best)

All statistics exactly as ordinary Goblins.
No Monstermark.

This creation looks exactly like an ordinary Goblin, but it gains hit points when struck, the addition being equal to the 'damage' rolled. It can only lose hit points (and be killed) by such means as casting Cure Light Wounds on it, or by sitting on its chest and force-feeding it with healing potions.

Comments: A fiendish creation indeed! One of the most interesting I have come across. It reminds me of the dancing sword in the Greenlands dungeon which every three rounds, leaves the hand of the wielder and remains poised horizontally in mid-air while the unfortunate warrior is caused to dance for three rounds, after which it returns to his hand . . . . Why a Goblin? As the designer remarks, "Why it is that Goblins are particularly susceptible to this strange disorder is one of the great mysteries of the world". But a Troll with Nilbogism would be a truly mighty opponent, and they are bad enough already. Inventive readers will be able to contrive other scenarios like the one which follows: great fun for the DM and, until the secret is out, quite awe-inspiring to the players.

Roger obviously felt that more explanation was necessary so sent us a scenario which explains in more detail the oddness of Nilbogism, together with some background 'information':–

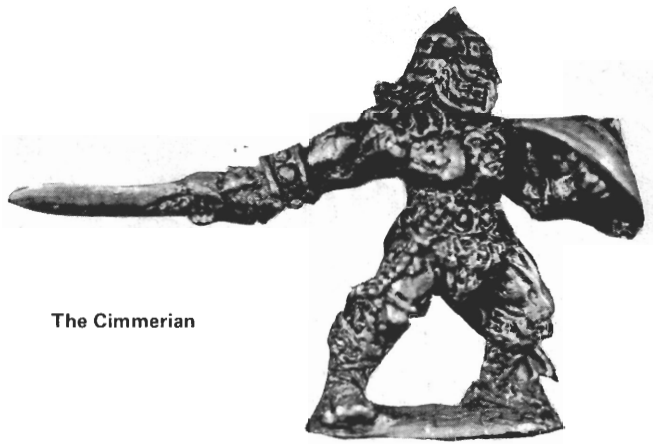
"This is a weaker mainfestation of Nilbogism – overly heavy use of magic strains the fabric of the space-time continuum and can occasionally lead to very strange effects which are usually, thank goodness, very locally restricted. Thus the Nilbog which is a Goblin suffering from a peculiar spatio-temporal reversal. In its more extreme forms, Nilbogism manifests itself in ways calculated to baffle even the most imaginative adventurers; an example occurs in the following scenario:–

A party enters a room deep underground, seeing an open chest and two dead Goblins. From the moment they enter until they leave, they have no effective control over their actions and no volition on the course of events. They suddenly feel wounded: they rush over to the chest and put treasure into it, closing the lid. The dead Goblins rise up onto the adventurers' sword-points, coming to life again. A fight ensues, with each blow struck restoring hit points to both the Goblins and the party, until the party has lost its mysterious wounds and the Goblins appear to be up to full strength. The adventurers then race out of the room and the door closes behind them . . . ."

For sheer creativity, the Nilbog will take some beating.

That completes the list for this time, but don't forget to send your contributions. After all, we can't have the *White Dwarf* editor dominating the column. Space restrictions may sometimes mean that your monster is held over for a few issues – our apologies in advance if this happens – but we will keep a 'reserve pool' and in time all worthwhile submissions will be published in these pages. I hope you enjoyed the first batch and can make good use of them.

Don Turnbull



The Cimmerian

ARCHIVE MINIATURES

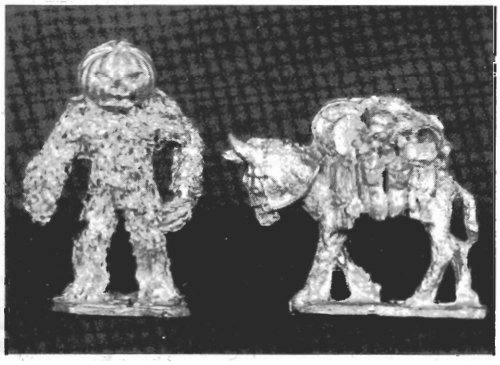
reviewed by John Norris

Archive Minatures are an American firm producing mainly fantasy figures. Their ranges include creatures and personalities from Mythology, Middle Earth, Dungeons and Dragons and other fantasy worlds. In style the figures are reminiscient of the better known Der Kriegspielers *Fantastiques,* though those from Archive are in a rather larger scale, with a man nearer 30mm than 25mm in height. They are attractively designed, and profusely detailed, but they are cast in a soft metal which produces less than crisp, or even blurred, detail on the castings. A considerable deterrent to British purchasers will be the prices, which are very high even by the standards of imported American figures.

Monsters for D&D

Undoubtedly the most useful of the Archive ranges are the two covering Mythology and Dungeon Adventures. Both provide numerous monsters, many of which are unobtainable anywhere else. Only a selection can be reviewed here. I have concentrated on the figures that I think will be most useful, and to a lesser extent on those I like. The principal type under-represented is the very large figures, which tend to be both very expensive and more affected by the lack of crispness in casting.

My favourite figure in the whole selection, is paradoxically, not a monster. It is the beautiful dungeon equipment mule. The poor beast is laden with a huge quantity of finely modelled impediments, including a horned helmet, shields, a cooking pot, a pair of boots, and a spade. Close behind the mule in my ratings come the fine owl-bear and the well detailed harpy.



Flying monsters are generally well represented. The harpy and the giant bat are both attractively modelled in flight. The large griffin, poised for take-off, is by far the finest model of that monster I have ever seen. Then there are three smaller winged figures, a nubile succubus, an imp and a pixie, all of which are good but not outstanding. The beholder is, of course, a levitating rather than flying monster. The figure is well modelled, with a suitably malevolent aspect.

The largest monster I have is the King Kong-style "Mighty Joe Gorilla", a very reasonable 50mm high giant ape. Only a little shorter is the Ogre Magi, which closely follows the "Japanese Ogre" drawing in Greyhawk . Another odd figure is the bugbear depicted with the silly Hallowe'en pumpkin head shown in Greyhawk . Two more large figures are the Nemeian lion and the boar troll, both of which have the appearance of oversize versions of the basic animals. One of the less successful figures is the werebear, which is a large bear with human proportions, and resembles nothing so much as an overgrown teddy bear! My own choice from the figures of this group would be the fine owl-bear, followed by the umber hulk, which is a good representation of that useful monster.

The smaller animals come in numerous varieties, of which I can only present a few. The best is a properly hideous carrion crawler, with its beard of tentacles, with the nice rotund little rust monster close behind. Other oddities are the blink dog, a smallish purple worm, a poor figure of a roper with a flat body, and the spook, which resembles a penguin in a sheet; an "SS Killer Penguin from Mars" perhaps? Among the enlarged standard small animals, the toad, which is quite suitable also as a spinescale (see *White Dwarf 2* for that useful aquatic nasty), lizard and rattlesnake are good, and the rat, tick, stag beetle and boring beetle are less so. The worst items in the whole range are undoubtedly the moulds, slimes, etc., which look just like odd bits of "flash"; the only way one can be sure that they are not is by comparing some of a single type, when it will become clear that they are in fact specially cast identical bits of "flash"!

Middle Earth

This range is treated separately because it is specifically designed for the Tolkien mythos, and therefore should be reviewed as such rather than as a collection of odd figures. It provides an attractive selection of personalities for Tolkien's Middle Earth, and a few other figures. A wargamer would need to mix them with some from other ranges to provide the rank and file; it is unfortunate that the Archive figures tend to tower over the equivalent offerings from other manufacturers because of their height, which is not really to 25mm scale but a full 30mm.

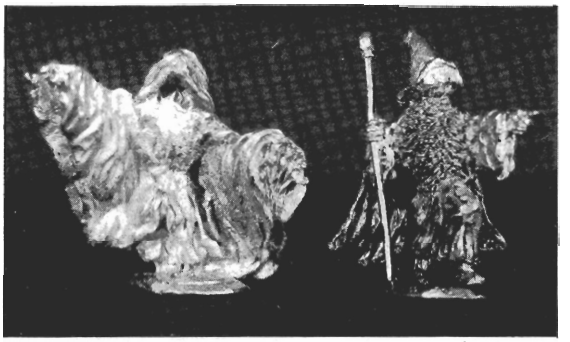
The *Fellowship* set of Nine Walkers includes some very original figures. Though the designer has retained the traditional mediaeval aspect for Gandalf, and indeed for the other wizards in the range, the men, the hobbits and the dwarf are all given a distinctly Renaissance look, which is a refreshing change. The four hobbits are a fine group, full of character, and Aragorn and Boromir are also good. The latter is particularly Renaissance

Continued on page 10

FIGURES REVIEW

Continued from page 9

in style, and resembles a Cavalier of the English Civil War; rather appropriate, when you think about it. The dwarf is also rather stylish, but the elf is poor; he resembles a pantomime wood sprite. A good feature of the set, especially as it is so expensive, is that it does not have to be bought as a whole. Gandalf, the two men, the four hobbits, and the elf and the dwarf can all be bought in separate packs. The range also includes a separate mounted Gandalf, and figures of the other two wizards significant in the story, Saruman "the Rainbow Wizard" and Radagast "the Brown Druid". The former is a very imposing figure, in an imperious pose, while the latter is full of character, almost exuding worry; both are very well modelled.



The other figures in the range that I have seen are less impressive. There are two large Orcs, whose bestial faces have pointed snouts, and whose helmets give them a distinctly South American Indian look; they are armed with a bow and with a billhook and a shield respectively. The Citadel Guard is a seemingly attractive design inadequately cast. The Nightwraith is a useful undead type in flowing robes with grasping skeletal hands. The Warg is poorly modelled, and the "Old Willow Man" looks like a desktop sculpture of pipecleaners!

Conclusion

A brief review like this one can only scratch the surface. Omitted in their entirety are such delights as the barbarian ducks, a series of mediaeval versions of the famous Howard, the numerous Amazons, the Dragon Pass figures for the world of *White Bear and Red Moon* and the more recent Star Rovers. Perhaps it may be possible to cover some of them in a future issue. Meanwhile, I hope I have shown just how useful these figures can be to the fantasy gamer. The monsters are ideal for a DM using figures, and the Middle Earth range is a source of fine, if rather large, personality figures. The hobbits and the dwarf will fit in fairly well with the Heritage/Asgard size of figure, and I recommend the former in particular to anyone using Heritage hobbits as rank and file.

Above, the Nightwraith and the Grey Wizard (Gandalf). On the previous page the Bugbear and Dungeon Expedition Donkey and also the Umber Hulk and Beholder.

Next issue:

To commemorate the birthday of *White Dwarf,* next issue will be rather special. Besides the beautiful colour cover by John Blanche, there will also be a dungeon room complex by Don Turnbull and articles by Gary Gygax (co-author of D&D) and Ed Simbalist (co-author of C&S).

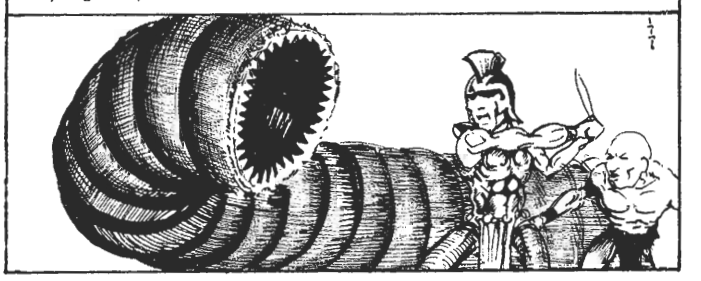
* **Lair of the Demon Queen**
* **Magic items in D&D**
* **The Fiend Factory**
* **Chivalry & Sorcery – starting off**
* **Treasure Chest**
* **Open Box**
* **Kalgar**

. . . the second release of *TSR's* revised D&D system is now available in the USA and is soon to be seen in the UK shops. It is the **Monster Manual** written by Gary Gygax. It is hard bound, contains around 350 monsters of which 200 are illustrated and costs $9.95. *Games Workshop* will be publishing this volume under licence but with a soft cover so as to keep the price down. It is expected that the **Advanced D&D Player's Handbook** and **Referee's Guide** will be released in the USA around July/August. There are numerous changes and amendments including a revised magic system with new spells, changes to characters' hit dice, e.g. fighters will use D10 instead of D8 . . .

. . . *Games Workshop* have moved lock, stock and barrel to premises in nearby Hammersmith. The full address is 1 Dalling Road, Hammersmith, London W6. The ground floor is a shop with probably the largest selection of SF/F games and figures anywhere . . .

. . . new games that have recently arrived in the UK are **Imperium** by *GDW* which is an SF game of interstellar warfare including economics and **Alpha Omega** by *Battleline* which is an SF ship-to-ship space combat game... Expansion sets 1 and 2 for **Cosmic Encounter** are now available and include a planet system, star discs and tokens for a fifth player and also contain ten extra aliens . . .

. . . as usual, new SF/F miniature figures are being produced almost daily. *Miniature Figurines* have released a new line under the title of **Valley of the Four Winds** which include some very nice and interesting Walking Mouths, Spiked Cats and various Living Dead . . . *Asgard Miniatures* continue to expand their fantasy range with Storm Giants, Centaur Knights, Giant Slugs and more. They have also released a range of science fiction figures which consist mainly of a race of Trimotes but also include Cyborg Fighting Machines, Mandiblex and others. Rules are now being written specifically for these figures . . . *Barry Minot* has recently expanded his **Thane Tostig** and **Age of the Barbarian** ranges. The former now includes many new skeletons and monks whilst the latter adds various barbarians and wenches . . . a new range of SF figures by *Archive Miniatures* entitled **Star Rovers** are now available in the UK and the Aphid Infantrymen, Nude Frinx and Fuzzies are up to Neville Stocken's (designer) imaginative high standard . . . *Wargame Publications* have produced a new line of fantasy figures entitled **Magic Miscellany and Arabesque** which consist of a Warlord of the Seven Hells, Eunuch, Eastern Magician on Flying Carpet and others . . .



A Place in the Wilderness

by Lew Pulsipher

This set-up, which is based on Jack Vance's excellent (Hugo-winning) novel *The Dragon Masters,* may be incorporated into your wilderness. It is not, obviously, a place to be encountered by low-level adventurers, but what level the party ought to be depends on how powerful magic is in your world.

Briefly, the descendants of human survivors of a lost space war on a barren planet have managed to capture some members of the lizard-like race which apparently won, and have bred the lizards into creatures which fight for them – the dragons of the title. (I have reduced the abilities of the dragons slightly while reducing the numbers tenfold.) The lizard race return to the planet looking for slaves, and they have specially bred humans who fight for them. The aliens' spaceship is not included because it would be too powerful. I would not use the pellets and beams in my campaign because highly sophisticated scientific weapons are not allowed, but the characteristics are included for those with different views.

This is a human settlement, alignment as referee desires but accustomed to fighting, in a fairly rocky area with just enough arable land around to support the population of 50 rabble at arms, 10 various specialists (including dragon trainers and breeders), 8 heavy armoured horsemen (who ride "spiders" or move on foot), one sixth level fighter chieftain, 80 women, and 160 children and old people. The people live in caves and tunnels in a cliff, somewhat like American Pueblo indians. The dragons live in caves lower down, including breeding areas and outdoor corrals. They become nervous at night and are usually put inside.

The primary treasure is dragon females and, if they aren't killed, the men who know how to handle and breed dragons. There is also a cache of precious metal and stones as the referee thinks appropriate.

In the book there are roughly five male dragons per female. Given the reduction in numbers here, assume one female of each type except termagants, two. Females normally do not fight but are capable of it. Life span of a dragon is about 35 years, maturing after, say, 5 years. The last column of the characteristics chart gives the number of viable eggs per clutch. Females clutch once per year. To determine what young dragons are present, consider what viable eggs were clutched in the past five years, with 20% chance that an egg will be female.

Dragon eyes (and perhaps tails) slowly regenerate (like a lizard's). They generally are not intelligent. All have soft bellies, AC8; it is difficult to tell from the books, but the bellies seem to be hard to get at whether the dragon is on two feet or four. A *spider* is a substitute for a horse. *Termagants* are rather smaller than men, active and fairly intelligent. *Blue Horrors* are larger, quick, fairly intelligent, furious. *Murderers* are not intelligent; striders are tall, longhorned ones heavier and lower to the ground. *Fiends* are immensely strong and low to the ground, low enough to run underneath *Juggers,* which are ponderous and huge. The different breeds were developed more or less in the order listed, each breed being the 'answer' to the one before.

The referee can, of course, increase the number of dragons while maintaining the same proportions. In the book there were about five communities of this type within 10-20 miles of each other. For more background information I suggest you read the book, available in paperback.

DRAGONS

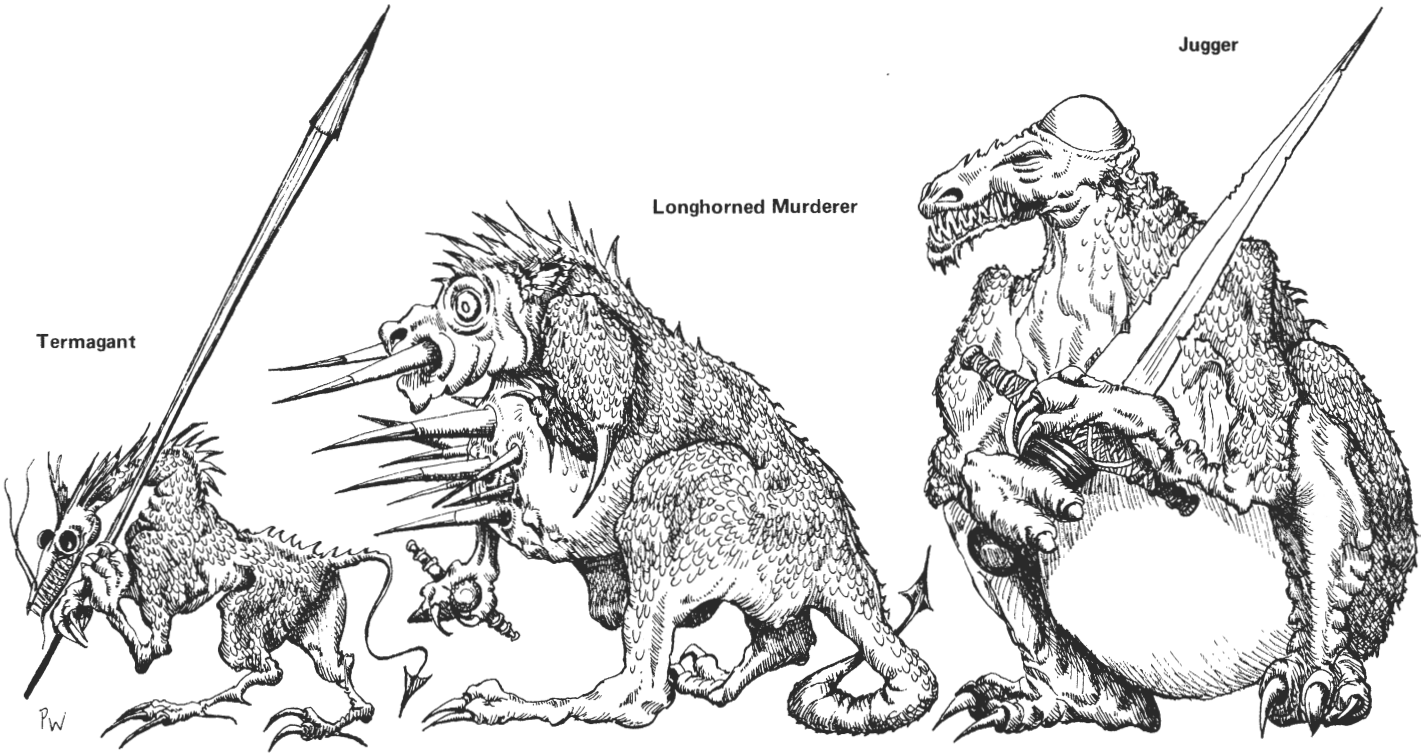
Number appearing	Name	Hit Dice	AC	Attacks	Move	Viable Eggs
5	Spider	1+1	4	–	21	1
12	Termagant	1+1	0	Fang 1-6 & 2 Claws 1-3 each or 2 by weapon	9	1+50% a 2nd
4	Blue Horror	2	0	(attacks as 3 dice monster) 2 pincers 1-6 each or 2 by weapon	12	1
3	Striding Murderer	3	0	2 by weapon (usually sword and mace)	15	1
3	Longhorned Murder	3+2	0	spike or lance or 2 by weapon	12	1
2	Fiend	5	-1	tail hils as mace but for 3-18, plus 1 weapon overrun/crush for 5-30 plus one weapon double damage	6	50% 1

HUMANS

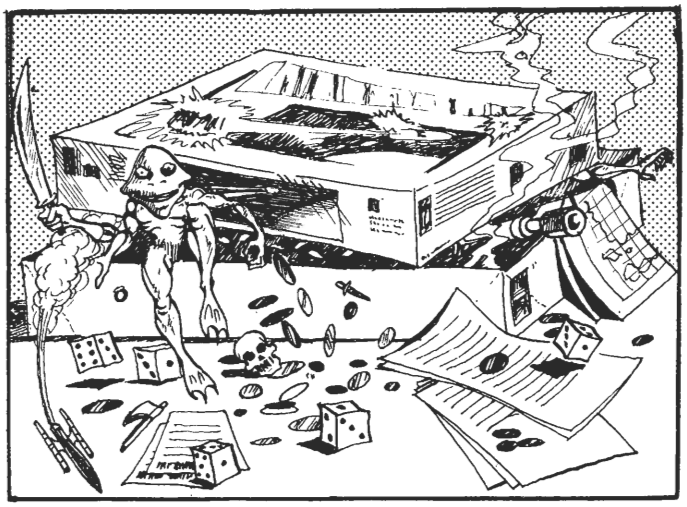
Name	Hit Dice	AC	Attack	Move
Tracker	1	2	by weapon	9
Heavy Trooper	2	2	by weapon	9
Weaponer	As normal man.			
Giant	As hill giant wearing AC2			

The heat beam is a hand weapon – roll for a hit as against AC9 regardless of target's armour class. At range 6/9/12 inches does 3-18/2-12/1-6 damage.

Explosive pellet guns are manned by weaponeers. Each pellet equals an 8 dice fireball.



OPEN BOX



OPEN BOX examines Science Fiction and Fantasy games and rulebooks currently in the shops. The reviews have been written by either independent authorities or members of the White Dwarf Test Panel.

The summaries are the Test Panel's opinion of four good and four bad points of the game reviewed. The OVERALL figure, on a 1—10 scale, rates the game itself taking all factors into consideration.

Please note that reviews carried out by people not on the Test Panel do not receive a rating.

KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE

Little Soldier — £2.95

Knights of the Round Table is a simple fantasy role-playing miniatures rulebook based on Arthurian legend, at its heart the knight and knightly combat rather than magic and magic items. There are several versions: 1) knight vs knight, afoot or horsed, for use in jousts and challenge ladder competitions, 2) simpler rules for melees between groups of knights during tournaments; 3) limited campaign rules for a single long session, each player representing one knight with a referee required; 4) war campaign rules, each player acting as a knight or wizard and able to establish a domain, with simple rules for combat between armies of knights, also with a referee required.

The booklet is over 60 pages long and clearly illustrates rules with extensive examples. It provides an excellent occasional alternative to one of the more complex role-playing games; the first version, especially, can be played during lulls or rest periods of long D&D sessions.

The one-against-one version uses percentile dice plus 10 combat options printed on cut-out cards. There are seven strike options plus rush, move, and defend. Each player secretly chooses a card and comparison gives a range of numbers which will cause a stun, knockdown, wound, or in extreme cases, death, and each rolls percentile dice for a result. There are provisions (some optional) for exhaustion, pinning an opponent on the ground and unlacing his helmet, blindside attacks, fighting two-handed without shield, etc. Each knight also has a prowess rating which can be used to advantage by the stronger one. Prowess is increased by successful combat, especially against a stronger knight. Battles are usually "friendly" and deaths are not supposed to occur, but occasionally do. A battle is simple and takes only a few minutes.

The second version is simplified by eliminating the choice of cards, but freedom of choice returns in the tactics of moving many figures on each side.

The difference between chivalrous and unknightly conduct is often stressed, and the campaign versions include rules covering remorse for an unknightly act, "false knights", revenge, and even falling in love (don't fall for an evil lady!). Also included are rules for rolling encounters (a form of wandering monsters), terrain, and limited monster characteristics. The limited campaign version can be used with the knight characters from the version one competition. Players will usually travel separately or in small groups rather than all together as in D&D. However, adventures and combat are simple enough that a referee can take care of several groups at one time and expect to play many turns in one session.

The full campaign is closer to a normal fantasy campaign. A hex board is needed because territory must be divided among rival rulers, and wars can be fought using a very simple system. Characters are still most important, not armies. There are rules allowing a knight or wizard to win while the game continues, playing a few turns every week or whatever.

Magic, such as there is, tends to be defensive and seldom on a major scale. This is a relaxing change from the tac-nukes, lasers, and superhypnosis of D&D. Probably the skill level which can be imposed in Knights of the Round Table is not high, but the same is true of many other role-playing games. Speed and simplicity are sufficient compensation.

Lew Pulsipher

ELRIC

The Chaosium — £8.45

Surely there can be no one reading this magazine who is in any doubt as to the subject matter of this game. Michael Moorcock's doomed albino has been one of the major causes of the resurgence of interest in the thirties pulp genre "Sword & Sorcery" (Tolkien is "fantasy" and so something else again). It was, therefore, just a matter of time before games began appearing which featured the major heroes of this literature. TSR gave us *Lankhmar,* SPI are trying to give us *Lord of the Rings* and now Chaosium, makers of *White Bear & Red Moon,* have produced a game entitled *Elric* based on Moorcock's fantasy hero.

Elric is a two, three or four player fantasy game which to quote the introduction to the rule book "Does not pretend to be a summary or a synthesis of the Elric sage . . . rather it is a synthesis of Elric's world".

The game comes in a zip-lock bag and consists of:

A 17" x 22" map
Unit playing pieces
22 battalia sheets
44 magic cards

The presentation of the components is excellent both in appearance (the artwork on the battalia sheets and map especially) and durability. There are three types of unit counters — small (½" square) army units, fleet units and large (1" square) personality units. The personality and army units are grouped into 22 nations or groups and referred to as battalia.

There are 44 magic cards representing spells etc., which can be used in combat. The cards also have other functions e.g., many of the cards may be used to "muster" a nation to a player's forces. At the beginning of the game these cards are spread around the board and all acquired by conquest and searching. Players build up their forces by acquiring magic cards then going to the relevant areas and mustering that battalia. The cards are divided into three alignments and a personality may not possess cards of more than one alignment concurrently.

Only personalities are normally capable of independant movement. Armies and magic cards accompanying a personality are removed from the map and placed on the personality's battalia sheet. This helps reduce those damned stacks that always end up on a fold.

The map, which is not a hex map, represents the nations and seas of the young kingdoms. The nations are subdivided into provinces as is magic card placement.

The combat system is slightly unusual, the attacker and defender first total the CVs (combat values) of their respective forces. Next any magic cards to be used are revealed. Finally each player rolls a dice and adds the result to his total CVs. The difference is cross referenced on the CRT and the result applied.

Elric is a credit to its designer, publisher and original begetter. The lack of hexes on the map and the movement and replacement rules are very reminiscent of *Russian Civil War* — no bad thing. The original features: the magic cards, the battalia, the cosmic balance, etc., make this a fantasy game apart.

Each of the two given scenariors complements the other admirably. In one, the players take nations and the victory is in controlling the Elric piece and Immrir province. In the other scenario one player *is* Elric, the other is Theleb K'aarna, the wizard. Victory is by eliminating the other personality. The first scenario shows again Elric's debt to Russian Civil War. Just as in RCW a player may use all political allegiances to further his ends, so in Elric he may use all alignments.

There are many more unusual features about Elric such as *End of the World, Stormbringer,* etc., which are not diversity for its own sake (I have always felt *White Bear & Red Moon* suffered from this) but are rather interlocking parts which transform this game into a cohesive whole.

One little blemish — not surprising in a game of this sort — a small amount of unit punching and cardboard cutting is required. But really, this is just nit-picking an otherwise fine game.

Gary Porter

GOOD POINTS	BAD POINTS
Rules	Luck factor
Presentation	Expensive
Artwork	Large playing area
Combat	Card cutting
OVERALL: 7	

D&D PLAYING AIDS

Judges Guild

Campaign Hexagon System (£1.85) is a booklet of which the main portion is devoted to blank campaign hex grids — over 60 of them. A rectangular hexagonal tessellation of about 1000 small hexes (each representing 22.2 acres, or 0.2 miles across flats) appears on each page; on this grid is superimposed a large hex representing 5 miles across flats, so there are 625 small hexes encompassed by the large one. This is a useful booklet of records for those involved in a fantasy 'wilderness' campaign game (though since the booklet is likely to get extended use I suggest the covers should be stiffened by clear self-adhesive plastic, such as shelf-covering).

The booklet also contains other guidelines generally relevant to this sort of campaign, including Keen Sighting, Hydrographic Terrain (rivers, streams etc.), Movement Obstacles, Prospecting (for ore, precious minerals etc.), Flora Types, Vegetables, Fauna Classifications — and many more.

Though I am not personally involved in 'outdoor' fantasy gaming at the moment, I should have thought this to be a most valuable source of reference data for player and gamesmaster alike.

Wilderlands of High Fantasy (£6.25) is another play-aid package similar in sone respects to the *City State* and *Tegal Manor* packages reviewed in *White Dwarf 3.*

First, there are two sets of five maps each; one set is for the referee, who gets all the detail of the mapped area, the other for the players who only get limited information. Each set contains (1) the area immediately around the City State, (b) Barbarian Atlantis — the area to the south of the City State map, (c) Valley of the Ancients — the area across the Windedark Sea, (d) Tarantis — the area to the east of the City State, and (e) Valon — the area north of the City State. To locate these areas, the best source of enlightenment is the map at the beginning of the booklet *Guide To The City State* published with the City State package.

The other 'half' of the package consists of booklets *N* and *O*. It's not easy to keep track of these guidelines booklets, but so far I think the position is that the City State package contains the City State booklet plus booklets *I* and *J;* the Tegel Manor package contained booklet *L;* the Wilderlands package contains booklets *N* and *O*. We seem to have lost booklets *K* and *M* en route, assuming they are published in letter order. Apparently these were issued with two other packages which haven't yet reached the UK. All this is getting rather confusing and it will be frustrating to many to have access to some of the JG material but not the rest.

Most of the booklet *N* is taken up with tables and other guidelines covering such topics as Ruins, Caves and Lairs, Searching, Prospecting, Hydrographic Terrain and more (there is some duplication with the information in the Campaign Hexagon System booklet). The villages of Barbarian Atlantis (*map b* in this review) and of glow-Worm Steppes (on *map c* in this review) are dealt with in some detail, as are the islands on both maps.

Similarly booklet *O* is mainly concerned with descriptions of villages, islands etc. on *map d* (Tarantis) and *map e* (Valon. It also includes a description of the territory of Huberic of Haghill — a castle and village in a particular hex of *map a* — and of other villages on that map.) Additionally there are guideline sections on Hirelings, Wishes (full and limited — a very useful section, this one), Quests and Geases, Morale and so forth.

There is no doubt at all that, particularly for the fantasy fan who is keen to base his campaign on the information concerning the City State and its neighbouring areas, this is another very useful addition to the collection. Indeed, the enthusiast who limits his gaming simply to a single dungeon of his own design will get many valuable ideas from these products. I have said before that, despite the ever-increasing volume of D&D-related material published nowadays, I have found no material so consistently high in quality and informativeness as the JG material, and I would still maintain this. I can recommend this package as highly as I did the City State and Thunderhold packages.

However I for one am starting to get a touch of mental indigestion — of 'tissue rejection' — from the JG material. Not because of the material itself — that is very valuable. What worries me is the rather disorganised and incoherent way in which the material is presented. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that we are on the wrong side of the Atlantic to get maximum benefit and to recognise the logical pattern underlying the publication (charitably assuming there is one).

Let that not be a reason for failing to buy the material, though. It is good, and well worth the money, particularly if you are a 'fantasy campaign' fan.

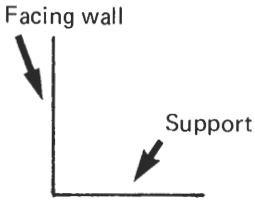
Don Turnbull

DUNGEON DECOR — THE ENDLESS DUNGEON

Falchion Products — £1.80 — **Wee Warriors — £3.25**

These two products are similar in function so a comparative review is appropriate. Both are 'kits' from which a DM can build up free-standing (sometimes) lengths of dungeon wall, with doors and other openings.

The DUNGEON DECOR structures are all L-shaped. They are formed from flat card sheets by cutting and creasing in the appropriate places. There are four sheets in the pack, each sheet carrying one 55' scale length, two @ 20', one @ 10' and one @ 5' wall sections, plus two doors in 10' lengths (one open, one closed) and two doors in 5' lengths (ditto). So 560' scale length in all. The walls are colour-printed to look like grey stone and have ominous patches of green fungus (or Slime?), cobwebs and manacles here and there. The doors are brown 'wood'. Also included in the pack are two 'dungeon floor' sheets, both A4 — one of regular 1" squares, the other of 1" staggered squares. The scale is about 1" to 5' (1:60) which makes the doors about 8' high.



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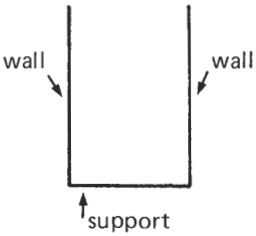
OPEN BOX

Continued from page 13



The ENDLESS DUNGEON structures are all U-shaped. Again these are formed by cutting and creasing flat card sheets. There are 15 sheets in the pack, each sheet carrying two 'long' sections and one 'medium' section, together with two entrances. The scale is elusive! The wall sections containing the entrances are 3.1cm (just under 1¼") wide, and presumably this represents 10' giving a scale of 1:96 (and this makes the door height about 7'8".) In turn this means the whole pack contains just over 1700' scale length plus 30 entrances. The walls are colour-printed in a grass-green shade, but there are no decorations and the entrances are simply black holes. Also included in the pack are six 1" hex sheets (for dungeon floors, printed in black 'stone' and with a reference number system which is almost impossible to read), a master hex sheet (hundreds of 6mm hexes) and a 'character roll' quick-reference sheet on which the DM notes the AC, hit probability etc. of each character in his current adventure.

Each pack has its points, but where the Endless Dungeon pack is featureless and dull, the Decor pack is attractive: the Endless Dungeon walls are more stable and have 'thickness', but how many times are both sides of a wall in play simultaneously?: the Endless Dungeon scale is weird and defies all efforts at systematic regulation whereas the Decor scale is obvious and immediately workable: the Decor walls are in varying lengths and are flexible in use – after all, the intent is not to build a permanent layout.

On a 'cost per unit wall length' criterion alone, the Endless Dungeon pack wins out. But in all other respects the Decor pack is preferable – why pay more for hundreds of yards of wall which are unlikely to be used, particularly when their appearance is so uninspiring? The Decor pack has been given some thought, care and attention but the Endless Dungeon pack gives the impression of having been thrown together. If you want this type of material at all and don't want to spend time making it yourself, Dungeon Decor is not a bad pack to get. However I think you may find either pack more of a nuisance than a help. I have seen two reasonably good methods of regulating melee; as usual, perhaps the simplest solution is the best, and the one I prefer is to use short pieces of wooden dowel, pre-cut to various scale lengths, which can be put together quickly and which are small enough to allow players to get their hands onto character figures without knocking the whole room over. The Decor walls are particularly prone to toppling at the wrong time. On the whole, then, I think you can afford to give both packs a miss.

Don Turnbull

LABYRINTHINE

Falchion Products – £3.25

To quote from the blurb:– "This game kit contains a geomorphic representation of an Evil Wizard's stronghold ... A holding force composed of a variety of evil creatures face a mixed group of lawful adventurers seeking to rescue a maiden..." Recognise it? Yes, it is a game remarkably similar to CITADEL, reviewed in *White Dwarf 3*. The Presentation is inferior to that of Citadel: the rules are less detailed and less well presented than those of Citadel: the game components are qualitatively inferior to those of Citadel: the game is less interesting in play than is Citadel.

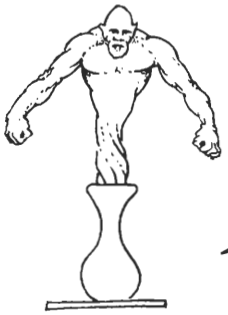
As if this wasn't enough, this game costs nearly a quid more than Citadel. What do you conclude? Yes – so did I.

Don Turnbull

MAGIC MISCELLANY & ARABESQUE

MA8 Warlord of the Seven Hells — 50p

MA12 Eunuch — 25p



MA13 Djinnbeing released from Bottle Prison — 25p

MA14 Eastern Magician on Flying Carpet — 25p

WARRIORS OF THE LOST CONTINENT

L1 Reptilian Officer
L2 Reptilian Standard Bearer
L3 Reptilian Drummer
L4 Reptilian Infantryman with Polearm
L5 Reptilian Infantryman with Crossbow
E1 Elder Race Officer
E2 Elder Race Standard Bearer
E3 Elder Race Musician
E4 Elder Race with Polearm
E5 Elder Race with Bow

MA6 Magician casting Spell
— All 18p

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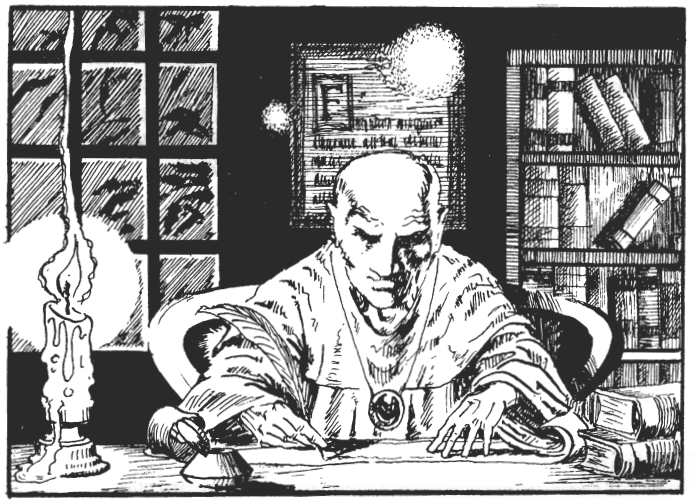
LETTERS



Readers' thoughts, suggestions, ideas, views, comments and criticisms. Letters should be sent to the Editor, WHITE DWARF, Games Workshop, 1 Dalling Road, Hammersmith, London W6.

Dear WD,

Having been recently introduced to D&D, and getting to the stage where I'm 'getting the hang of it', I would like to comment on Don Turnbull's 'Monstermark' system.

I'm in full agreement with Paul Jaquay's letter *White Dwarf No. 3* as regards the system and would greatly appreciate an explanatory article (do I hear murmurs of support from my innumerate brothers?). My own estimate of the 'M' value of Don's 3-part article is around 1000, noting the brain-destroying properties of each page. I'd write more only my brain has turned to jelly. Don . . . . . help!

Cheers,
Dave Coleman, London

Dear WD,

Please, for Heaven's sake, get rid of *Kalgar* and quickly. Have the imperial guard send a dozen ringwraiths or something after him. Are you seriously going to waste a whole page on a cartoon strip? A cartoon strip? My dear sir, if I want to look at silly pictures of people with ballons coming out of their mouths I shall waste my money on a comic book. In *White Dwarf* I expect to find material on science-fiction and fantasy games; that is why I buy it. It's bad enough (but presumably necessary) to lose space to advertisements, but really, childish rubbish is the prerogative of the Dragon; I expect better things of you. I am highly dubious as to whether there is any value in Mr. Norris's figure reviews, finding, myself, that straightforward description of whether so-and-so's dwarves have pointed helmets or not is acutely boring and of no practical function other than duplicating manufacturer's catalogues. I would seriously question the worth of printing "reviews" of tin figures that cost 18p apiece and most people will see before buying anyway. Again, surely you must have better stuff in your files than this? But whatever you do, dispose of Kalgar and anything faintly resembling him. That sort of twaddle is best left to Marvel comics and the like, whose business it is. The forte of *White Dwarf* is the presentation of game-related material the like of those excellent contributions of Messrs. Pulsipher, Turnbull, and others. Not comic strips and not miniatures catalogues.

Yours faithfully,
Roger Musson, Edinburgh

Dear WD,

I notice that most letters in *White Dwarf* concern themselves with the praise or otherwise of the various articles. I would just like to say a few words in praise of your artists who really do an excellent job. Some of the front and back covers have been really amazing and the new comic strip *Kalgar* is a welcome addition to the pages in my opinion. Tell your artists to keep up the good work.

Yours sincerely,
John Robinson, Lincoln

— The two letters above are an example of one of the problems facing an editor. Kalgar in or Kalgar out, more D&D or less D&D, Open Box expanded or Open Box left out altogether? Every person has his own view and so we are going to get you *to fill in a questionnaire — details next issue. — Ed.*

Dear WD,

I am writing in order to reply to Bill Seligman's objections in *White Dwarf 5* to D&D players rolling attack dice.

1. Inconvenience. I have started campaigns in Michigan, North Carolina, and London, all composed of undergraduate and graduate college students. None found it inconvenient to roll their own. In fact, virtually all desired to, even at first when only my two D20 and some D6 were available for the entire game. Enough players learn mechanics on their own (the reason why I don't change many rules, so I won't have to explain) that everyone knows what he needs to hit. Although no one had played before meeting me, at least 75% purchased dice and 80% constructed their own dungeons/wilderness within 8 months. For most players there is no inconvenience.
2. Cheating. If a referee isn't confident that he can prevent cheating he ought to quit, first because he's incompetent, second because he's got a group of very odd players who ought to be doing something more cynical than play a fantasy wargame. If a player is going to cheat, why does he bother to play, especially a game like D&D which doesn't entail winner vs. loser? The idea of someone producing loaded polyhedra dice is paranoid. I wrote "D&D Campaigns" for adults, not children (and I'm not talking about age, but demeanor). (If one does encounter a childish player, keeping an eye peeled when he rolls is sufficient.)
3. Telekinesis. You can't be serious.
4. Computer. Most referees don't have access to computer generated random numbers. It is faster for one-off adventures (I've used such in tournaments) but see below.
5. Mechanics. Most players learn mechanics, even if they don't become referees, though I did know one person who played for a year without being permitted to see *any* rules. It's a *game,* not a simulation, and you can't practically prevent players from thinking mathematically if it will help them succeed. None of the 15 in my campaigns were maths nuts, yet many of the wargamers thought mathematically at times. But in any case, unless the referee stupidly gives away the number of hits the monster can take (size does *not* indicate hits because skill is also involved), knowing the exact damage you've inflicted is no more help than knowing *roughly* how heavily wounded the monster looks, and you can't avoid telling players that. On the other hand, to roll one's own attacks and damage helps identification with the character and participation in the game (especially those too underconfident to say much otherwise). To be able to say "I smeared that ———————— troll! (8 hits!)" is far different from passively watching while the referee says "you hit him". I've seen players get violently excited while rolling in a way that could never occur while they were just watching. The game is also as fast as when the referee uses a random number list, and faster than when he must not only record everything but roll all dice as well.

I've played D&D in six states and Britain, including many one-off games with people I hardly knew (including residents of New York city). Judging from this experience, Mr. Seligman must play with a very peculiar bunch of D&Ders. If a referee wants to roll all the dice, fine, but my suggestion is better for *most* campaigns.

Yours sincerely,
Lew Pulsipher, London

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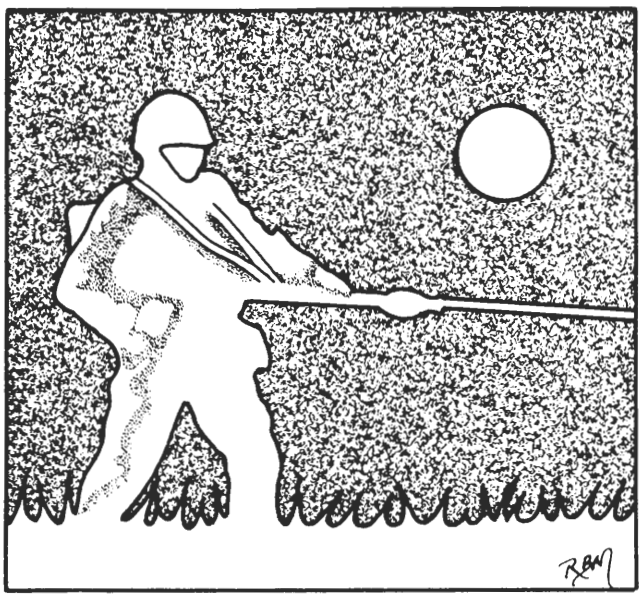

TRAVELLER

reviewed by Don Turnbull

Two or three years ago the board wargames market hit its first saturation level — the level of frequency of games production which exceeds the digestive capacity of the buyer. Since buying has not itself abated, there must be many collections containing games which have been given no more than a cursory examination (if the boxes have been opened at all); in-depth study of a particular game is a thing of the past except for those self-disciplined enough to resist the temptation of the bewildering array of new games in favour of advancing their knowledge and experience of a well-tried favourite. Some would argue that games manufacturers have an obligation to limit their outputs and to ensure that each new product has been subjected to careful evaluation, otherwise there is a good chance the market will be flooded with mediocrity and the chance of the isolated classic gaining deserved recognition will be small — not a good combination of circumstances for manufacturers and buyers alike. To those who argue in this way, games manufacturers should be dedicated, purposeful people who perceive the needs of the hobby as transcending their own need to survive, who resolutely ignore the bandwagon in the interests of the art.

Unfortunately, an unrealistic expectation.

The role-playing game market is not saturated yet, though the nature of the material itself — virtually limitless in scope — means that saturation could arrive much sooner than in the board wargames world. Even now, less than three years since Dungeons & Dragons first reached the UK, the arrival of a new role-playing game on the shelves is not the event it used to be. The bandwagon has started to roll. First D&D and En Garde, then EPT, T&T, B&B, Metamorphosis Alpha, C&S and no doubt other letter-pairs being hurried to completion before the crest of the wave passes and buyers are forced to become discerning. Traveller appears while the market is still amply capable of accommodating it; it has already sold well, I understand, though the extent to which it has been played is far from clear.

Traveller is produced by Game Designers Workshop in the USA and its arrival in the UK was greeted with some rave reviews in amateur magazines and it was hailed as the game which would do for science fiction what D&D has done for fantasy. It is not, of course, the first role-playing game in the SF genre — TSR's Metamorphosis Alpha (MA from now on) preceded it by nearly a year; yet no similar laurels were garlanded on the brow of MA and it seems to have disappeared with hardly a ripple. Yet Traveller and MA have a good deal in common, at least superficially.

It is a debatable point whether either game will actually be played, experimentation aside. D&D is played, and played extensively, both face-to-face and by post. New D&D-orientated magazines are still appearing and there seems to be an inexhaustible supply of material for them — enthusiasts continue to relish debate on new monsters, new character classes, new artifacts and new approaches. En Garde appears rarely to have been played face-to-face but has established a fair postal following — it too seems to have 'arrived', though not to the extent of D&D.

So the first two role-playing games to appear are going quite well, thank you. But others have emerged as transients — greeted with enthusiasm, studied superficially then consigned to the shelves to catch dust. Does anyone actually play T&T? Does rabbit role-play in B&B command any interest? Has MA any support? Is the realism of C&S a big enough factor to draw people away from D&D? My guess is that, to most of the fantasy game-buying public, all these products have been snapped up not for their own merits but as sources of new D&D ideas, discarded when exhausted. They have, in effect, been D&D supplements, and while TSR cannot have been best pleased by others cashing in on the D&D idea, imitation is a sincere form of flattery. TSR should not be worried — my belief is that D&D has been strengthened rather than undermined by what set out to be competition.

I have doubts, therefore, about the ultimate destiny of Traveller, and these doubts arise before even opening the box. Like MA, its scope is so vast that to play it thoroughly must approach a lifetime's experience. The referee's task is crucial here, for in both games it is virtually limitless. In MA he must populate a gigantic space-ship of seventeen 'decks' the smallest of which is about 400 square miles in area. Even this is simple compared with Traveller, in which the referee must populate a universe! Granted, the referee does not need to complete the entire ship or universe before play can begin, but if the players are to have anything like reasonable freedom of action and choice the Traveller referee must do a good deal more preparation than the D&D dungeonmaster, who can get by initially by creating two or three 'levels'. If MA has failed to make its mark with a vast, though limited, canvas, can Traveller, with a literally infinite canvas, hope to succeed?

But enough of questions and doubts — let's see what lies underneath the blankets. Physically, the game consists of three booklets attractively presented in black covers with red lettering, the booklets boxed in the original D&D style. The paper quality is good, as is the quality of printing and layout — no half-printed lines, no misprints I have found, good use of varied type-faces, clear tabulations and comfortable print size. Within these booklets are rules, charts and guidelines which provide a framework — the bare essentials for play. How adequate (or otherwise) the framework is can only be determined by lengthy practice and will hinge to a great extent on the imaginativeness of the referee and players.

Characters and Combat

Only two topics are dealt with in the first booklet, of which three-quarters is devoted to an elaborate procedure for character generation. More than a passing resemblance here to En Garde (from the same stable) for the basic, raw, inexperienced 18-year-old character starting life in the Traveller universe must undertake certain experiences of a military nature before starting an active career of adventuring. He should attempt to enlist in one of six Services — if refused enlistment he must submit to the draft, in which case he could end up drafted into the Service which refused him enlistment (a commission and promotion are harder to get as a draftee). To acquire skills, improve his characteristics (strength, dexterity, endurance, intelligence, education, social standing), gain experience in handling weapons and advance personal qualities (leadership, administrative skill)

he can remain in the Service for a maximum of seven terms of four years each, though re-enlistment after each term is not automatic, nor is it easier if the previous term was a successful one (say marked by promotion) which is surprising and perhaps a minor error of judgement. Generally speaking, the longer the length of service the more skills etc. are acquired and the greater is the eventual mustering-out cash benefit and annual retirement pay; however as a character ages some of his characteristics may reduce ('detrimental aging effects'). Additionally, there is a risk, taken each term, that a character will be killed on active service so there is a chance that a player who develops an excellent 42-year-old character, with bags of useful acquired skills, advanced education and a healthy potential bank account will see him killed in his seventh term of service. In which case there is no alternative but to start afresh with a new character (there are no Raise Dead spells in Traveller) – yet, in contrast to D&D, the player will not yet have experienced the game proper.

The business of character generation is very thorough and I found it interesting to create personalities simply by following the procedure and seeing what emerged. I was intrigued by the branch of the services called 'Other' – since all the more respectable branches are covered elsewhere I deduce that this branch contains the cooks and latrine orderlies. The tables have been carefully contrived and the results are quite credible – altogether I found this section quite compulsive and a worthy beginning to the project.

The remainder of the first booklet deals with combat – rules governing the resolution of personal encounters-by-force which characters are certain to meet as they explore the worlds of the Traveller universe. Basically this is familiar ground for the D&D player or the 'wargames miniatures' enthusiast. However the skills developed by the character in the previous section play their part, as well as his strength, dexterity etc. and the result is good continuity between the sections. The variety of weapons is of course very wide – from bottles (which start life as clubs but after their first hit become crude daggers) through automatic rifles and SMGs to laser carbines and laser rifles. Similarly, personal protection varies from Jack (a natural or synthetic leather jacket) to Battle Dress (the powered armour with all sorts of electronic gear which Robert Heinlein specified in Starship Troopers).

Again, this is an elaborate, coherent and credible system and in my view the first booklet passes with full marks.

Starships

The second booklet deals with travelling, trade and 'all there is to know about starships' including economics, construction and combat. There are also short sections on drugs (availability, properties and legality) and on the means whereby a character can gain further experience and skills during, but not as a result of, his adventuring. This is in sharp contrast to D&D in which experience is the product of a character's actions, and perhaps the omission of the latter aspect will be regarded by some as a significant drawback.

Commonly, since most stellar systems have only one major world, travel between worlds is interstellar (via the 'jump') rather than interplanetary, though both are covered. The rules are explicit and straightforward, including sections on hazards such as hijacking, misjumping (a catastrophe which could send an interstellar ship into unknown waters, so to speak) and the risk incurred by loading the ship with unrefined fuel. Travel on interstellar ships is undertaken in one of four conditions ranging from 'high passage' – luxurious state room and first class cuisine at a high cost – to 'low passage' which means suspended animation in the ship's freezer. An advantage of the latter, its low cost aside, is that the character does not age during the trip. On the other hand there is a chance he might not survive the re-amination process at the end. There is a somewhat macabre rule whereby low passage travellers indulge in a lottery organised by the ship's captain, the winner being the one who guesses the number of low passage travellers who survive. If the winner happens to be one of those who fails to defrost properly, the captain collects!

One of the things an adventurer may do when mustering out of the services is to set himself up as a Trader. This is rather a dull means of making a living, and buying the starship will cost a pretty penny, but it is good steady work and the profits can be quite reasonable. The rules cover the purchase, shipment and resale of 36 different cargoes in an uncomplicated fashion.

The largest part of the booklet is concerned with starships – first how to buy them and operate them, their design and construction, their computer and its programmes, their weaponry and crews; then how to fight with them. The arithmetic in this and the travelling section is rather more complicated than before, particularly in the 'planetary templates' section where beasts like square roots and cubes occur. Nevertheless the calculations are pretty basic and should worry only the innumerate (who shouldn't be playing the game anyway). The starship construction section is interesting and, as elsewhere in the booklets, there is a wealth of detail. If a character ever gets rich enough he can even order his own personalised starship, selecting the hull design, power plant, drives etc. almost at will. However the cheapest standard design costs a basic 32½ million credits: since maximum annual retirement pay from the services is 10 thousand credits, it's a safe bet not many youngsters will be seen riding their own personalised spaceyachts. Though it is possible for a character mustering-out of the services to be already in the process of buying a merchant ship or a scout on long-term hire-purchase.

Starship movement is another interesting section, again with some above-basic mathematics in the form of simple vectors. GDW have previous experience which has obviously helped their development of this section – the game Triplanetary came from the GDW stable four years or so ago. Although the game didn't achieve great success (so far as I am aware) the vector movement system was novel and most realistic, and so it is here. The effects of gravity are here handled at a more complex level than I recall in Triplanetary, and they take some figuring out.

The combat system is probably the least novel since it uses techniques already well established in the miniatures field. However there is a complication I haven't met before – the ship's computer which controls all a ship's activity and is especially used to enhance weapon fire and defensive activity. The part it plays is so significant that there is a special 'computer reprogramming' phase in each player turn and there are 35 programmes available. This adds a good deal of interest and a fair amount of complexity to starship movement and combat, but on the whole I think gamers will welcome the increase in complexity as a small price to pay for added verisimilitude.

The contents of booklet 2 are, on the whole, harder to grasp than those of its predecessor. There is a lot to learn, of course, but the text has the virtues of great clarity and readibility (and the indexing will help to track down dimly-remembered references). Its compilation has been carefully and methodically executed: it is a very good example of rule book layout. It is probably, also, the most useful booklet; those who don't want to play Traveller but who do enjoy starship combat actions in miniature will be able to extract most of the sections and put them to good use.

Worlds and Adventures

At last, I thought as I opened the third booklet, we can really get down to business. So far we know how to develop the man, how he fights, how he gets from world to world and how his ship is built, is made to move and can fight to protect him. We have amassed a whole lot of information, guideline tables and rules for this, that and the other. Now let's get playing.

Just to remind us on how vast a canvas Traveller is painted the third booklet opens with the modest reminder to the referee that it is his responsibility to map the universe . . .

First, there are star mapping and world creation rules. Nothing tricky here though a lot of detail including starport types, planetary sizes and atmospheres, hydrographic percentages, population, type of government, law level and technological level. As an example, let us generate a world:

Starport type: C. Routine quality installation with reasonable repair facilities but no refined fuel for sale. Within the starport is a Scout base (and the

Continued on page 18

TRAVELLER

Continued from page 17

scouts have a private cache of refined fuel).

Size: 8000 miles diameter. About earth size.

Atmosphere: Trace. Virtually a vacuum.

Hydrographic percentage: 30%. Quite a lot of water, considering the lack of atmosphere.

Population: 10 million.

Government type: Civil Service Bureaucracy. We should know what that means.

Law Level: 11. Curious — I'm off the chart here. The chart runs from 0-9 and is 2D6-2; automatic modifier of -7 and + the population increment which in my case is 7. I rolled 11, which remains 11 when modified, but the chart stops at 9. Level 9 means very strict prohibition on firearms, so 11 must mean no offensive weapons at all under pain of death; no pea-shooters.

Tech. Index: 5. They have developed gunpowder (they have SMGs) but don't know how to make chain armour; they have simple computers and radio, but no television, and despite the fact that there is quite a lot of water about they haven't invented the submersible. They have fixed-wing aircraft but no nuclear fission.

Altogether this is a pretty improbable world. Interesting to know, for instance, how those fixed-wing aircraft fly in what is virtually a vacuum, and what do the bureaucrats breathe?

However I do not criticise the rules here, for it is the referee who, having used the tables as guidelines, resulves any apparent contradictions before presenting the world to the players. And even on earth, societies have been known to develop in most improbable ways. The one failing seems to be that the dice can produce a result which is not listed on at least one chart; this is a careless flaw (or am I misreading the instructions?).

Passing over the section on Equipment which is pretty straightforward and contains no surprises, the next section is on Encounters and it is here that the 'monsters' make their first appearance. Those who are looking to Traveller for new D&D monsters will be disappointed here, for animals are treated with very broad strokes of the brush, the details being left to the referee. What there is in this section is probably enough for an inventive referee to work on, but I get the impression that, having completed most of the work, the designers had to leave this section rather flimsy, either because of weariness or a rapidly-approaching production deadline. This may be unjustifiable and harsh, but the impression is there all the same, and this is not the only section of the third booklet which produces that impression.

The final section is about Psionics which always seems to crop up somewhere (though ever since TSR's unfortunate Eldritch Wizardry psionic rules, I have developed blinkers). This is quite a detailed section (which, on my earlier thesis, must have been written earlier than its place suggests) but had TSR approached the subject in this way I think it would have fitted better with D&D. Grudgingly (only because of my anti-psionic prejudice) I welcome this section and give it good marks.

Conclusion

And that, as they say, is that. The third booklet concludes with a half-page of print which effectively says 'take it from here'. Brought up on a diet of wargames, I was looking for more; in my dull, unimaginative way I rather hoped for a fourth booklet, perhaps giving examples of play, scenarios, rumours of treasure trove, research philosophies and trends, an outline description of particular worlds and their occupants. Perhaps such a booklet is in the course of preparation (the box will hold at least two more); if so, its absence is deeply regretted, but if not I wonder whether the designers are expecting too much of potential purchasers. MA, though it contains less detail than Traveller (since its canvas is smaller) gets the reader into play immediately since the referee could straight away get down to designing a room complex with 'finds', mutations, monsters, artifacts, weapons and whatever. The Traveller referee, in contrast, closes the book and sits back for a long think. This is all very well in theory, but in practice other preoccupations are likely to compete with Traveller for the referee's time, and he might never get beyond the thinking stage.

It would be easy, and certainly unfair for the most part, to point to gaps in Traveller. But one omission, or overapproximation to be more charitable, does strike me as serious. The rules appear to assume that no intelligent (by which I mean approximating to the intelligence of man) species exists other than the Terran human. Granted that another half-booklet would be needed to introduce 'race-generation' rules, and granted that the referee could write some in, but the implicit assumption that no alien intelligence would be encountered seems to me unwarrantable. Additionally, a good deal of interest in the game would be generated by encounters with other races (as a lot of the interest of D&D derives from the monsters tackled). Much of the interest of MA is a product of the extensive rules concerning mutations of player-character and non-player-creatures; I'm surprised that GDW should have missed such an obvious selling point. (Haste to meet publication deadline? In course of preparation??)

Altogether, what is here is very satisfactory and much of it is stimulating. The presentation is exemplary, the detail impressive, the treatment exacting and the inventiveness inspired. However I feel there are serious drawbacks — not in the rules as they are (despite omissions and some evidence of inadequate testing) but in respect of the game's scope. I get the uneasy feeling that here is a prime example of something which will be welcomed avidly and bought (sales are already good and this article is unlikely to change that) but never achieve 'active status'. Its appeal is immediate, its attraction compelling and its topicality apposite, but my guess is that it will occupy shelves rather than players' minds. Having said this, I can't honestly suggest you don't buy it — in so many respects it is too good to miss; but be prepared for the transient nature of its appeal and usefulness.

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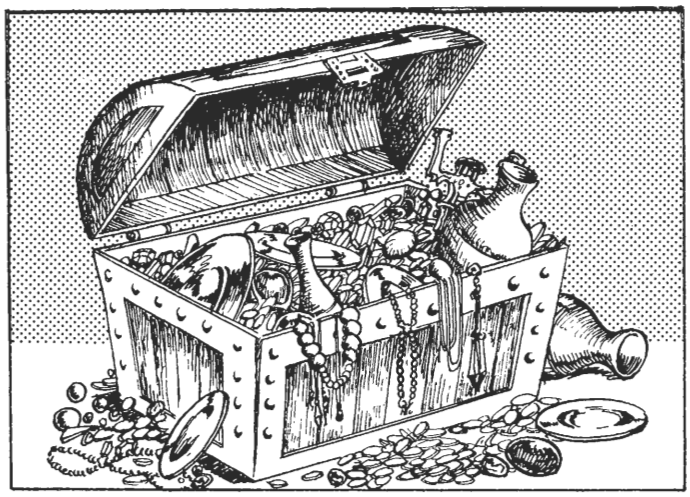

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New Magic Items

by Duncan Campbell

The Millenium Blade

This highly ornate golden sword was, according to legend, beaten on the anvils of the Cyclops under Mount Korf. The guardian of the Millenium Blade is a Hill Giant (AC4, 8D8, 2-16 damage). The runes on the blade can be read by lawful magic-users. They state:

Men call me the Millenium Blade,
the sword of whom the Cyclops made.
To have killed the guardian you have paid,
for the bearer shall always have my aid.

If a chaotic character lifts the sword, the blade will explode doing 1-4 damage. The Millenium Blade will serve its lawful owner by causing to be summoned ten naked men who are painted for war. They each carry a sword that is identical in appearance to the Millenium Blade and they fight as Beserkers (1D8+1, AC7, 1-8 damage). When the danger has passed they immediately disappear whether they are unhurt, wounded, captured or dead.

The Crystal Fount

This resembles a normal fountain. At the bottom of the fountain bowl, under the water, is a layer of crystals worth 500GP. The water is drinkable. However, should anyone drink it or immerse any part of his body in it, he will immediately scream and come out in a red rash. The red rash is, in fact, harmless but his fellow adventurers might attack him as he approaches them with cries for help. When the rash disappears (2-5 turns) the character's prime requisite will have increased by 2. However, should he be killed by the party, the crystal will turn to stone.

The Staff of Demons

This staff, if picked up, sends a shock up the arm of the finder as a warning. Should this warning not be heeded and the finder continues to hold the staff gargoyles (4D8, AC5, 4-16 damage) will appear at the rate of one per melee round up to a maximum of ten. They will retreat if the staff is wielded but will not be harmed by it. They can only be dispelled by the finder reading out aloud the first inscribed word on the staff – *NAMALLA.* Should the second word – *ALLAMAN* – be read also or first, nothing will happen. However, should it be read on its own once the gargoyles have been dispelled, they will reappear at the same rate as before but this time will be at the command of the staff bearer.

The Asbury System

Part II

by Brian Asbury

In the first of these articles on D&D experience, I dealt with awarding points for killing monsters. This time, it's the turn of points to be awarded for casting spells. I'm aware that not everybody gives points for successful magic-use, but I do, and this particular bit of the *Asbury System* involves using the following tables:

TABLE 1 – MAGIC-USERS

	Spell Level								
Mu Level	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
1–2	100	200*	300*	400*	500*	600*	700*	800*	900*
3–4	50	200	300*	400*	500*	600*	700*	800*	900*
5–6	33	133	300	400*	500*	600*	700*	800*	900*
7–8	25	100	225	400	500*	600*	700*	800*	900*
9–11	20	80	180	320	500	600*	700*	800*	900*
12–13	16	66	150	266	416	600	700*	800*	900*
14–15	14	57	128	228	357	514	700	800*	900*
16–17	12	50	112	200	312	450	612	800	900*
18–19	11	44	100	177	277	400	544	711	900
20+	10	40	90	160	250	360	490	640	810

TABLE 2 – CLERICS

	Spell Level						
Cl Level	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
2–3	100	200*	300*	400*	500*	600*	700*
4–5	50	200	300*	400*	500*	600*	700*
6	33	135	300	400	500*	600*	700*
7–8	25	100	225	360	500	600*	700*
9–11	20	80	180	320	458	600*	700*
12–14	16	66	150	266	416	600	700*
15–16	15	61	139	247	386	557	700*
17–18	14	57	128	228	357	514	700
19–20	11	47	105	188	294	423	576
21+	10	40	90	160	250	360	490

TABLE 3 – ILLUSIONISTS/DRUIDS/HEALERS

			Spell Level						
Il Level	**Dr Level**	**He Level**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
1–3	1	1	100	200*	300*	400*	500*	600*	700*
4–5	2–3	2	50	200	300*	400*	500*	600*	700*
6–7	4–6	3	33	133	300	400*	500*	600*	700*
8	7–9	4	25	100	225	400	500*	600*	700*
9–10	10	5	20	80	180	320	500	600*	700*
11–12	11	6	16	66	150	266	416	600	700*
13–16	12–15	7–12	14	57	128	228	357	514	700
17–19	16–19	13–19	12	47	105	188	294	423	576
20+	20+	20+	10	40	90	160	250	360	490

An asterisk against the number indicated by the table means that this level of spell can by used by a caster of the level opposite it only if it is being read from a scroll or book. If this system is being used, no experience should be awarded for finding scrolls; the experience is awarded when the scroll is read.

How to Use The Tables

There are three ways in which these tables may be used:
(i) The nice, easy, straightforward way, is to simply take the numbers generated by the tables to be the number of points awarded for casting a spell of that level, successfully. If the spell is not successful (e.g. its victim makes his/her/its saving-throw, or the detect spell detects nothing, or the DM operates a Klutz system which makes the spell fail or backfire), then no points are awarded for the spell.
(ii) A second, alternative, slightly more complicated method, is as follows:

For spells which perform single, non-offensive functions such as Detect Magic, Clairvoyance, Legend Lore, etc, or for spells which affect a single individual, such as Charm Person or Invisibility, award points as above.

For offensive spells which affect more than one individual, however, the experience points awarded should bear some relation to the number of creatures affected, and to what they are. Therefore, for these spells (e.g. Sleep, Hold Person, Cloudkill, etc), divide the number of points indicated by 10, and then multiply by the number of *Hit Dice* of creatures affected.

Example 1: A 3rd level magic user puts 7 gnolls to sleep. Gnolls have 2 hit dice each, so the points awarded are as follows:

$$(50 \div 10) \times (2 \times 7) = 70 \text{ points.}$$

Example 2: A 7th level illusionist casts a Paralysation spell (3rd level) at five harpies, affecting four of them. Harpies have 3 hit dice each, so:

$$\text{Points awarded} = (300 \div 10) \times (4 \times 3) = 360 \text{ points}$$

Example 3: A level 6 cleric puts Hold Person on two 3rd level fighters. Hold Person is a second level spell for clerics, so:

Points awarded = $(133 \div 10) \times (2 \times 3) = 79.8$, rounded off to 80.

(iii) Use either method one or two above for spells not actually causing damage, but for those causing physical damage (e.g. Magic missile, Lightning bolt), award points for damage caused instead, using the table from *White Dwarf 5.*

In the next of these articles, I'll outline how the *Asbury System* awards experience points for finding treasure and magical items.

Hit Location in Melee

by Martin Easterbrook

Under these rules the location of a hit is dependent on 'how well' the blow was struck i.e., how easily did it penetrate the defender's armour class.

Die Roll (above value to hit, i.e. above 17 for 1st level vs AC2)	Effect
+0	Body hit, cumulative damage only
+1	Body hit, cumulative damage only
+2	Body hit, cumulative damage only
+3	Hit to lower body or legs (may not sever/crush)
+4	Hit to arms (may not sever or crush)
+5	Hit to head (defender stunned and forfeits next blow)
+6	Hit to legs (may sever/crush if damage to the particular limb hit has accumulated to more than its limit)
+7	Hit to arms (may sever/crush as for legs)
+8	Hit to head, defender knocked down *
+9	Hit to head, defender blinded if sufficient head damage has accumulated
+10	Hit to head, defender beheaded if sufficient head damage has accumulated
above +10	1 extra point of damage, to head or named target** for each extra 'pip' above 10.

* Defender knocked down — chances of rising again are determined by throwing a D6 at the *end* of each subsequent melee round. To rise — Unwounded: 4, 5, 6; Wounded (over ¼ hit points): 5, 6; Damaged leg: 6.

** Named target — an attacker may 'aim' at a specific target. If he fails to make a high enough throw (e.g. +3 to hit the legs) then he misses completely. If he makes or exceeds the required throw then he has hit the named area (add 1 to required throw if he names a particular arm or leg).

Note: The 'Die Roll' value is the number scored *after* bonuses for strength, magic weapons, etc. have been added.

An extra roll is used to decide which arm or leg (or possibly head) has been affected.

Damage Allocations

Each arm may absorb half the creature's total hit points before it is disabled.

Each leg may absorb half of the creature's total hit points before it is *damaged*. A damaged limb halves the creature's movement (one quarter for two damaged limbs in a biped, for a quadruped the penalties would be one quarter and a half). When a leg absorbs three quarters of a creature's total hit points then it is disabled and can bear no weight, at this point a biped falls over.

The head may absorb half of the creature's total hit points before the creature is blinded or beheaded.

Some modification of these values is necessary for multi-limbed creatures such as spiders and octopi but the value of the limb damage allocation should be a fairly easy decision on the part of the DM.

Warning: When using this system monsters of higher levels are much deadlier adversaries than usual.

Editor's Note:

White Dwarf Nos. 4 and 5 *featured an article entitled Monsters Mild and Malign which was a collection of monsters that had previously appeared in various amateur magazines. Although the magazines were given credit, the authors were not and we would like to set the record straight:*

Glitch — Chris Pettus (A&E); *Droll, Smoke Creature, Ibem, Imp* — Mark Norton (D); *Black Monk, Smoke Demon* — Hartley Patterson (NFB); *Mind Drain, Cyborg, Manta, Cyclops* — Wayne Shaw (A&E, ATWM); *Black Leech* — Larry Stehle (A&E); *Black Orc* — Chris Bursey (NFB); *Death Snake* — Bill Bleut (A&E); *Fuzzy, Steely* — Paul Jaquays (D); *Bogy* — Bear Hedberg (A&E); *Gremlin* — Martin Easterbrook (NFB); *Cynopard* — Jim Bolton; *Banth* — Jay Saylor and Rodney Tobar (A&E); *Kzin* — Mark Swanson (A&E); *Sphex* — Nicolai Shapero (A&E); *Iron Demon* — Glenn Blascow (A&E); *Mobil Diss* — Jim Ward (D); *Threep* — Robert Hollandier (A&E); *Typo, Goldeater* — Lee Gold (A&E).

A&E = Alarums & Excursions
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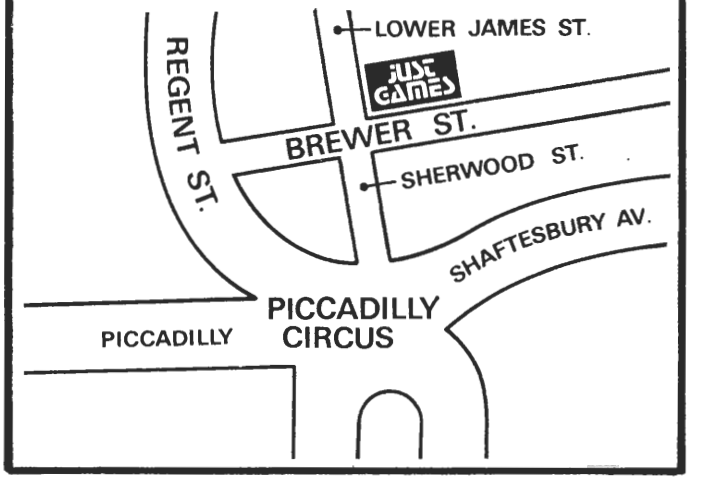

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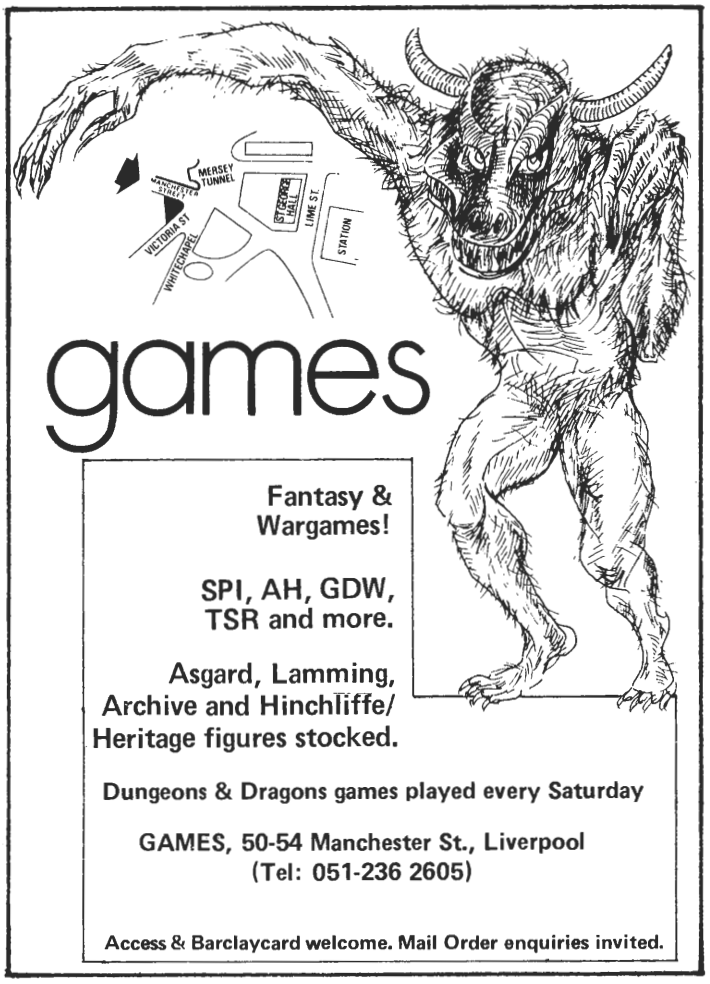

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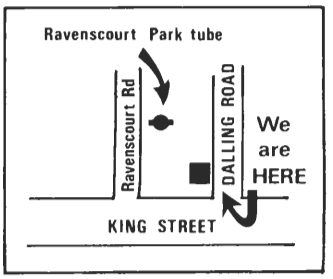

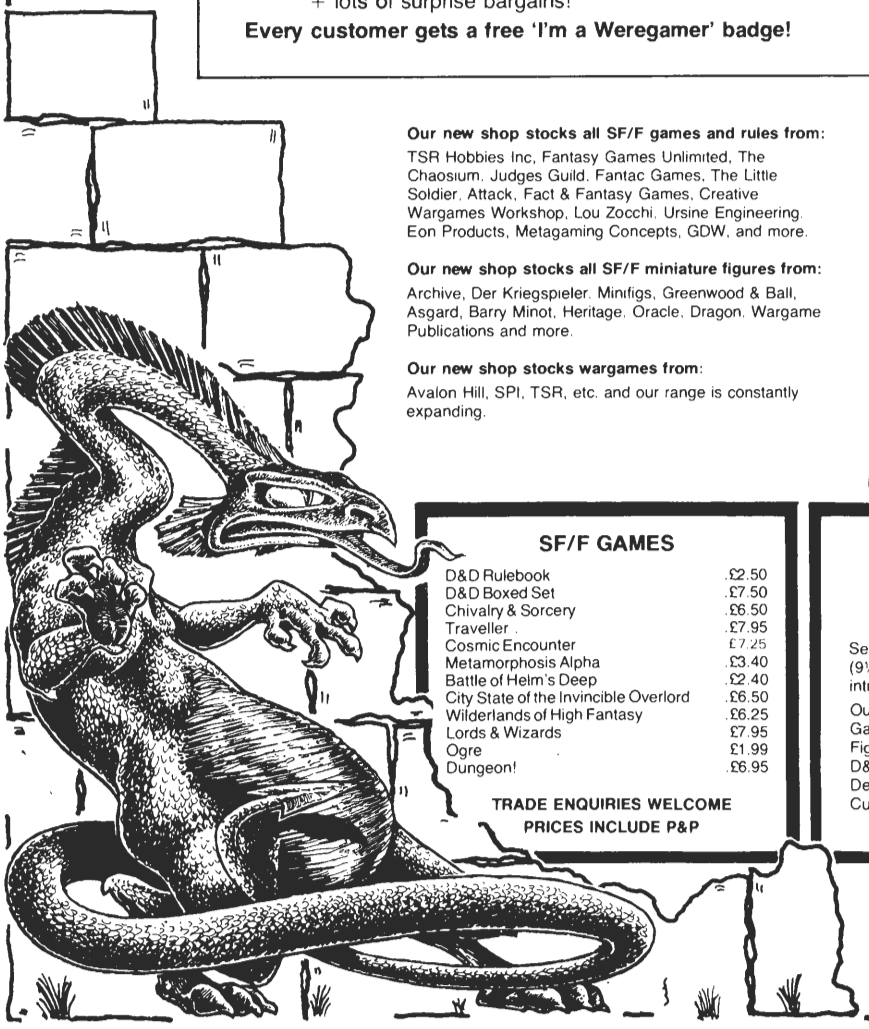

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